

## Fact Sheet: H1N1 Flu

### Q. What is H1N1?

A. H1N1 is a new flu virus also known as “Swine Flu.” The symptoms are very similar to the regular seasonal flu. H1N1 has genes from swine flu, bird flu, and human flu.

### Q. How serious is H1N1?

A. Like seasonal flu, H1N1 flu can vary from mild to severe. Most people get better without needing medical care. However, thousands of people in the U.S. die every year from seasonal flu. Some people are at higher risk for complications from the flu. The groups are slightly different for seasonal flu and H1N1 flu.

### Q. What’s the difference between regular flu and H1N1 flu?

A. The age groups affected by H1N1 flu are usually younger than those affected by the regular seasonal flu. This is true for those most often infected, and especially for those who have serious or deadly illness.

The most serious cases and deaths related to H1N1 so far have been in people younger than 50.

### Q. Why should I get vaccinated?

A. Getting vaccinated is the most effective way to prevent the flu and its complications. We don’t expect the seasonal flu vaccine to protect against H1N1. You should consider getting vaccines for both seasonal flu and H1N1 flu.

### What can I do?

Preventing the flu is most important and is a **shared duty** of everyone in Maine, especially to protect people who are at higher risk for getting very sick.

- Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue or your sleeve when you cough or sneeze. If you use a tissue, throw it in the trash after you use it.
- Wash your hands often with soap and water, especially after you cough or sneeze. Alcohol-based hand cleaners are also effective.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, or mouth. Germs spread this way.
- Try to avoid close contact with sick people.
- Consider getting both the seasonal (regular) flu vaccine and the H1N1 flu vaccine.
- **If you don’t like getting shots, you may be able to get a nasal spray if you are healthy, between ages 2 and 49, and not pregnant.**
- If you are at risk for complications from either type of flu and you get a fever and cough or sore throat, call your health care provider. There are prescription medicines (like Tamiflu®) that can help.

**Q. Do I need to be vaccinated?**

A. US CDC recommends that the following groups get a seasonal flu vaccine when it is available:

- Children ages 6 months to 18 years
- Pregnant women
- People age 50 and older
- People of any age with certain medical conditions
- People who live in nursing homes and other long-term care facilities
- People who live with or care for those at high risk for complications from flu, including:
  - Health care workers
  - People who live in the same house as persons at high risk for complications from the flu
  - People who live in the same house and people who care for of children younger than 6 months old

US CDC recommends that the following groups be offered the first available H1N1 flu vaccines:

- Pregnant women
- Household members and people who care for children younger than 6 months old
- Health care and emergency medical services workers
- All people ages 6 months - 24 years
- People ages 25 - 64 years who have health conditions linked to a higher risk of medical complications from the flu, including those with lung diseases that cause trouble breathing, diabetes, heart disease, and people with compromised immune systems.

**Q. I'm not in a priority group. Can I still get the H1N1 vaccine?**

A. We won't have enough vaccine for everyone in Maine all at once. CDC has suggested that the groups listed above should get the first available H1N1 flu vaccine.

**Once the highest priority people have received H1N1 flu vaccinations, we expect to have enough vaccine for anyone who wants it.**

**Q. What should I do if I get sick?**

A. People with the flu may be able to infect others from 1 day before getting sick to 5-7 days after. This can be longer in some people. If you get sick, you should:

- Keep away from others as much as possible to keep from making them sick.
- Stay home for at least 24 hours after your fever is gone without fever-reducing medicine.
- If you have serious illness or you are at high risk for flu complications, contact your health care provider or seek medical care.

**Stay informed.**

**Check these flu web sites:**

[www.flu.gov](http://www.flu.gov)  
[www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu](http://www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu)  
[www.maine flu.gov](http://www.maine flu.gov)

**Follow Maine CDC's updates:**

- **Facebook**  
search for "Maine CDC"
- **Twitter**  
<http://twitter.com/MEPublicHealth>
- **MySpace**  
[www.myspace.com/mainepublichealth](http://www.myspace.com/mainepublichealth)
- **Maine CDC's Blog**  
<http://mainepublichealth.blogspot.com>

**Maine CDC Public Call-in Numbers:**

Monday - Friday 9 a.m. – 5 p.m.

1-888-257-0990

NextTalk (deaf/hard of hearing)  
1-800-606-0215

**Email your questions to:**

[flu.questions@maine.gov](mailto:flu.questions@maine.gov)